

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Congressman Mike Pence spoke on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives in support of H.Res. 562, Directing the Office of the Historian to compile oral histories from Members of the House of Representatives involved in the historic and annual Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, marches, as well as the civil rights movement in general, for the purposes of expanding or augmenting the historic record and for public dissemination and education. His remarks as prepared:

"I rise today in strong support of H.Res 562, offered by Ms. Sewell of Alabama. I wish to extend my deep appreciation to Ms. Sewell, a native of Selma, Alabama, for introducing this timely resolution.

"As we close Black History Month and near the anniversary of 'Bloody Sunday' and the Selma to Montgomery, Alabama civil rights marches, it's important to remember the sacrifice of those who went before us nearly half a century ago and shed blood so that freedom could continue its march in the hearts and minds of so many Americans.

"To that end, thanks to a resolution offered by Congresswoman Terri Sewell from Alabama, the U.S. House of Representatives is acting to preserve the valuable oral history of those Members of Congress who were early leaders in the American civil rights movement. The resolution will also document the experiences of many Congressmen and Congresswomen who have participated in the annual pilgrimage from Selma to Montgomery. "It is a fitting honor of that momentous day in 1965 when my friend and colleague, Congressman John Lewis, the legendary civil rights leader, along with Hosea Williams, led 600 brave souls across the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

"I was deeply honored and humbled to serve as the co-leader of the 10th Congressional Civil Rights Pilgrimage sponsored by the Faith and Politics Institute in March of 2010. My family and I will never forget that experience.

"We started the weekend at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, the home church of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Sitting in the front pew we heard from Dorothy Cotton about her years working with Dr. King. She spoke of the faith that sustained their work and the historic importance of music and singing to the movement.

"We then made our way to the Civil Rights Memorial to honor and remember those who had lost their lives in the struggle for equality. The nearby museum tells the personal stories of segregation by those who lived it and peacefully fought against it. Hearing firsthand accounts of how African Americans in the South were systematically denied the right to vote, intimidated, beaten and even killed fighting for that right will never leave us.

"The next day we traveled with John Lewis to Selma to mark the anniversary of a day that changed his life and America: March 7, 1965, also known as 'Bloody Sunday.' John was personally recruited by Dr. King as a college student and his courage and moral authority continue to inspire millions.

"As John recounted that momentous day, he told of how he and several hundred courageous activists crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma during a march on the state capitol and were beaten by state police waiting on the far side of the bridge. The images of that day were transmitted around the world and would sear the conscience of the nation. It set the stage for more protests and was the catalyst for Congress to enact the Voting Rights Act later that year.

"We gathered for worship at Brown Chapel in Selma, and after a rousing service, we left the church to walk to the Edmund Pettus Bridge. I had the privilege to walk the entire way alongside John Lewis and Dr. F.D. Reese, pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Selma.

"As we strolled the historic route, surrounded by thousands, I was enthralled by Dr. Reese's description of that fateful day. He said that when they reached the crest of the bridge and could

see the other side of the river, the first thing they saw was the state police waiting to stop the march. He said, 'All you saw was a sea of blue.' But still they marched.

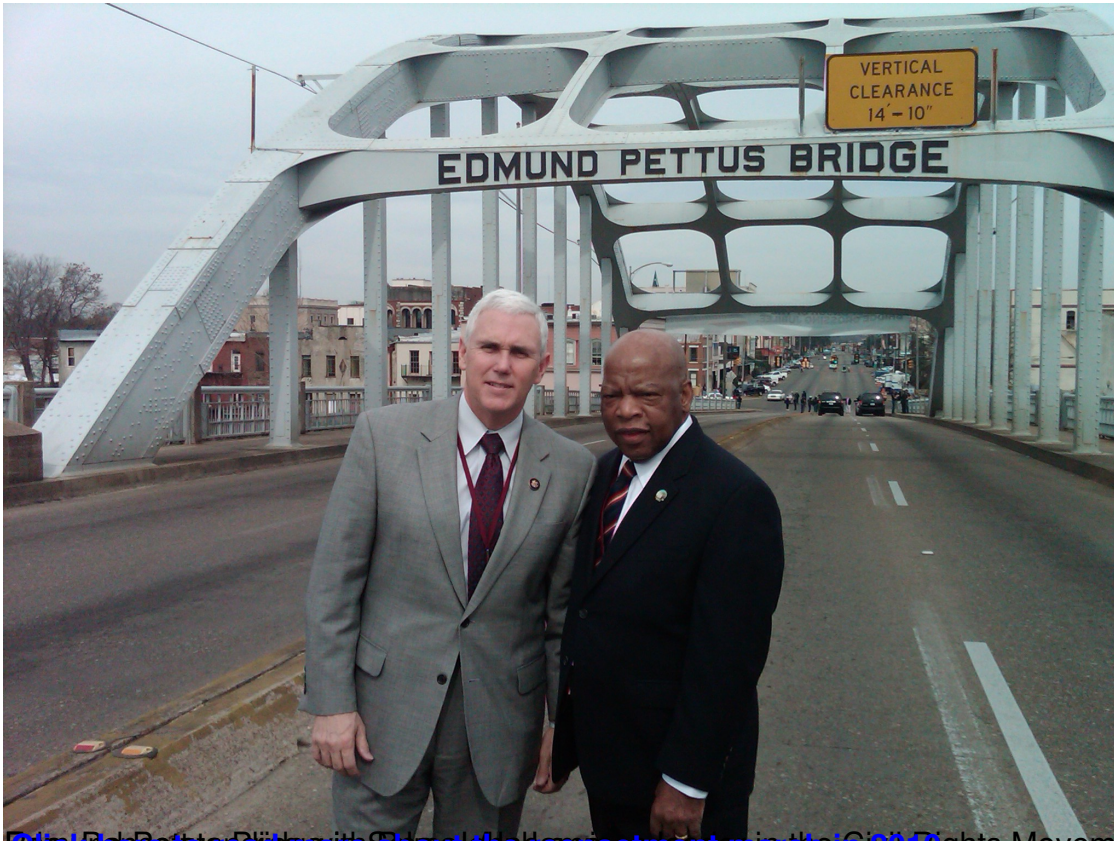
"I asked if they thought of turning back when they saw the array of police. He smiled and said, 'No, we had prayed at the Brown Chapel and decided we would go on regardless.' And so they did.

"After pausing at the base of the bridge for prayer, he told me how the tear gas and the beatings with night sticks overtook the crowd. My friend John Lewis was among those most severely beaten.

"As our march came to an end, I extended my hand to Dr. Reese and thanked him not only for what he had done for the civil rights movement, but also for what he, John Lewis and others had done for America that day. Dr. Reese replied humbly, 'God did something here.' And through these brave Americans, I believe that with all my heart.

"Every American should know the story of Montgomery and Selma. Thanks to courageous Americans like Dr. King, Congressman John Lewis, Dorothy Cotton and F.D. Reese, these cities have become an integral part of the American story in our nation's unrelenting march toward a more perfect union.

"Today's resolution further safeguards this valuable history so that it may endure throughout future generations, and I urge my colleagues to support it."



[Click here to read more about the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#)
Rep. Ed Pettus (R-Ind.) with Sen. John Holloman (R-Tenn.) in the Civil Rights Movement, at the